

Division Turns Trash Dump into Children's Treasure

By Spc. Jan Critchfield
122nd MPAD

FORWARD OPERATING BASE PATRIOT, Baghdad -- With several million dollars worth of infrastructure projects underway in Sadr City, the 1st Cavalry Division's 1st Brigade Combat Team has been moving forward to bring progress to the once conflict-torn streets of eastern Baghdad.

Although larger, more expensive projects such as sewage lift stations and electrical distribution networks will benefit the people of Baghdad in the long run, smaller, quicker projects allow multinational forces to show locals their true colors—that they are in Baghdad to help the Iraqi people.

"As we do patrols in the area...[locals] have always been good to us and helped us out as much as possible," said 1st Lt. Gerald Kubicek, a platoon leader with Company A, 20th Engineer Battalion. "So, we thought that since we use their neighborhood so much, we ought to give a little back."

On Nov. 30, Soldiers of

Company A teamed up with local children and cleaned a trash-covered area in the middle of an eastern Baghdad neighborhood, converting the land into a park. Infrequent visits from the city's trash trucks and no trash bins for locals to use resulted in what was turning into a local trash dump, threatening the health of those living nearby.

Seeing U.S. vehicles entering the area, local children ran to meet the Soldiers and ask for candy, which Soldiers often bring for them.

"Kids always approach us and want candy, but this time we had something for them to do. We wanted to encourage the local children to help themselves by using the rakes and shovels we provided to help clean up," Kubicek said. "Since there were a lot of kids out there, we gave school supplies as a token of our appreciation after the work was done."

Since trash disposal had been the problem that made the field unusable in the first place, a trash pit was constructed so families have a centralized



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Children and Soldiers of Company A, 20th Engineer Battalion, clean a field in eastern Baghdad during an effort to convert the field from a trash dump into a park.

place for refuse. The following day, a local contractor delivered two swing sets and other playground equipment, giving local kids a place to hang out and play football (soccer), the Iraqi national pastime.

"Now we have a nice, open park, two swing sets, and

a place for them to deposit their garbage, instead of having it laying all over the place," Kubicek said. "We have a vested interest in giving something back to the Iraqi people. Projects like this one are a reminder that the American people are here to help."

Engineers Wade Through Gazaliya Sewer Project

By Sgt. Dan Purcell
122nd MPAD

CAMP AL-TAHREER, Baghdad -- Skirting roads that sit ankle deep in water, frustrated pedestrians, the residents of Gazaliya Township have found a new ally in their efforts to clean up their streets.

The 1st Cavalry Division's 91st Engineer Battalion, has stepped in at the request of the local Neighborhood Advisory Council to help fix the problem in Gazaliya, a community of about 250,000 people, who have had a lot of problems with their sewage system lately.

According to Lt. Col. Chris Martin, the battalion's commander, the first step in the project is the repair of two local pump stations that push raw sewage to a water treatment plant.



By Sgt. Dan Purcell, 122nd MPAD

A local waste removal truck, provided by multinational forces, removes water from in front of a Gazaliya butcher shop.

"Right now a lot of the sewage is going out into the streets. The project is going a little bit slower than we anticipated because we are working concurrent

projects in the area so that the sewage will flow more easily," Martin explained. "Unfortunately, we have, also, had some security issues in this area but I expect we will see some improvement soon."

In addition to getting the pump stations on line, sewer line cleaning is an annual event for the residents of Gazaliya.

"There's not [much] elevation here so the sewage doesn't flow by itself. There's a lot of trash and they don't have a good storm drain system, so the trash goes in and clogs up the sewer lines," Martin said. "This year, however, the Iraqi government was unable to [fund the project], so we are taking over that for them and hopefully next year they will be able to continue."

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91st Engineers Help Clean up Sewage in Gazaliya

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Other issues compounding the sewer problems include collapsed sewer lines and the erosion of flooded roadways.

"Part of the problem we have here is that underneath the roads we have sewer lines that have collapsed over time because the construction standards here are no where close to what we expect in the United States," Martin added. "But the real problem is not so much with the pipes but the bedding and the soil around them. If you compact the soil properly you solve the problem of collapsing pipes, and we have a very good contractor working on fixing the problem."

Speaking in agreement with Martin, a local Iraqi contractor expressed his concerns.

"We are working hard to fix the system because, when the sewers back up, the water that floods the streets is not only a health problem but it also erodes the existing asphalt sub-base and creates a bigger problem later," the contractor said, wishing to remain anonymous for security reasons.

Repairing the sewer system in Gazaliya is only part of an on-going larger effort to restore critical services to the residents in this middle class neighborhood that has been victimized by insurgent attacks on multinational forces patrolling the area.

"This is probably the largest project we have undertaken since we've been here," Martin said. "We've had quite a number of projects, like school renovations and garbage removal, throughout the neighborhoods in our area of operation so we have spent quite a bit of money all over."

To date, almost \$1 million have been spent in repairing the sewer systems around Gazaliya, and the money also



Photos by Sgt. Dan Purcell, 122nd MPAD

(Above) Soldiers from the 1st Cavalry Division's 91st Engineer Battalion work their way through some of the flooded streets of Gazaliya during an on-site inspection of the existing sewer problems and the current repairs being made. (Right) Lt. Col. Chris Martin (left center), battalion commander of the 91st Engineer Battalion, performs an on-site inspection of a sewage pump station in Gazaliya Township.



helps to stimulate the local economy.

"One of the stipulations in all our projects is that 90% of all unskilled labor must be hired from the local area because we try to give jobs to as many people as we can," Martin added.

"Repairing the pump stations is a quick fix to a long term solution...it's just a matter of getting these things finished," Martin added. "The people are frustrated,

they see people working but they don't see the progress that is being made, so it's important that we get this done. It gives the local government credibility."

Useful Iraqi Words/Phrases

Can you show me on the map?
mumkin tureenee AHIal khareeTa?

Friday
High: 63
Low: 36



Saturday
High: 64
Low: 43



Sunday
High: 66
Low: 46



Weather information provided by 1CD Staff Weather Office (SWO)

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News Notes

Groovy Lamp Kills In a Heated Rage

SEATTLE (*Reuters*) -- A Washington state man who placed a lava lamp on a hot stove died when the lamp exploded and a glass shard pierced his heart. Phillip Quinn, 24, was found dead in his trailer home on Sunday night in Kent, about 15 miles south of Seattle. "There appeared to have been an explosion that was centered on the stove top. There were glass fragments all over, embedded in the walls," said Paul Petersen, a Kent police spokesman. Quinn was probably standing in front of the lamp when it exploded, then stumbled into his bedroom and died, according to a medical examiner's report.

Ex-Boyfriend: This Bud's For You

DOVER, N.H. (*AP*) -- A Dover man took off on a lawnmower moments after he allegedly threw two Molotov cocktails at his ex-girlfriend's apartment building. Police said the homemade bombs, two glass Budweiser bottles filled with gasoline and plugged with rags, did not burst into flames. He was arrested Saturday night after a brief, slow-speed chase. Steven Coleman was arraigned in Dover District Court on charges of criminal trespass, attempted arson, and resisting arrest, a misdemeanor. He could face up to 31 years in jail if convicted on all charges.

Taking the car out for a swim...



Janesville Gazette

Janesville, Wis., firefighter Bob Gabbey keeps an eye on a SUV as it is removed from the swimming pool deck of the YMCA in Janesville Wednesday. The driver was pulling into a parking stall when the vehicle accelerated through the window and dropped six feet to the deck, just missing a plunge into the deep end of the pool. The driver was not injured.



Austin American-Statesman

The Trail of Lights in Zilker Park will open to the public Sunday, but it needs a little last-minute sprucing up. Wedged between the trail's giant nutcracker and Santa's House Wednesday was City of Austin Parks and Recreation worker Alex Serna, gives the display a fresh coat of paint.

Find Your Way to the Trail of Lights

AUSTIN, Texas (*Austin American-Statesman*) -- Visitors will see more than 1 million bulbs along this year's Trail of Lights at Zilker Park - assuming they can navigate to and from the event.

On both Saturday and Sunday, parts of Barton Springs Road, Robert E. Lee Road and Stratford Drive will close from 4 p.m. until midnight. From Monday through Dec. 23, Barton Springs Road through the park will close at 5 p.m., and Stratford and Robert E. Lee will close at 6 p.m. Everything will reopen at midnight.

Parking will be typically trying, but officials hope that lots at the park and a shuttle service from downtown will make it less of a hassle.

An opening-night parade will kick off at 6:30 p.m. Sunday, followed by the ribbon-cutting at 7 p.m. and live entertainment at 8 p.m.

Capital Metro will offer round-trip shuttle service for \$2 (\$1 for ages 6-12 and free for

those 5 and under). On Sunday, shuttles will begin leaving Waterloo Park at 5:45 p.m. and will return passengers a block away at 14th Street and San Jacinto Boulevard.

Starting Monday, shuttle tickets will go on sale at 6:15 p.m. at the pick-up point near Waterloo Park, with the first bus loading at 6:30 p.m. each night. Buses will drop visitors off at the trail entrance and pick them up where the trail ends at Stratford. The last bus will leave at 10:45 each night.

On Monday only, a canned food donation will be redeemable for one free shuttle ticket.

A few visitors can park at Zilker for \$6 per vehicle.

"We're recommending everyone use the Trail of Lights shuttle," said Victor Ovalle, an Austin parks spokesman. Those who use the shuttle might have to park at state lots. The city is still talking with the state about making the lots free for the holidays, he said.

Seattle SuperSonics Stun San Antonio

SAN ANTONIO (AP) -- Tim Duncan can be added to the list of those who believe the Seattle SuperSonics are for real.

The surprising Sonics built a big first-half lead Wednesday night against San Antonio, and then they got clutch scoring from Ray Allen down the stretch to hold on for a 102-96 victory over the Spurs.

"They're a very good team," said Duncan, who scored a season-high 39 points while leading a San Antonio comeback that petered out in the final minutes.

"Very well-coached - they execute well," Duncan said. "We have respect for them."

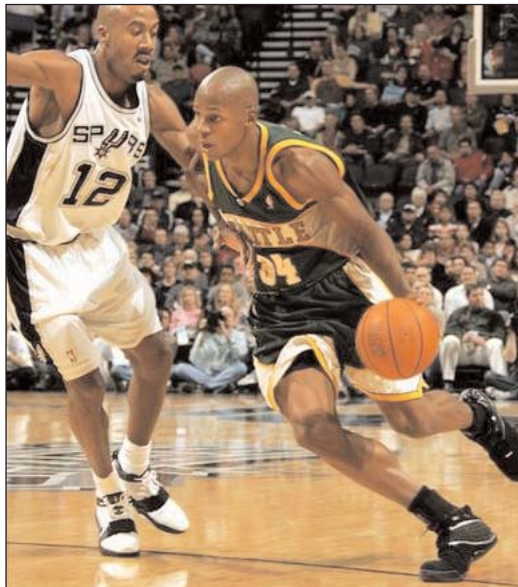
Seattle's victory ended San Antonio's 21-game home winning streak and gave the Sonics a share of the NBA's best record at 16-3. Phoenix also improved to 16-3 after beating the Los Angeles Lakers 113-110 late Wednesday night.

It was also the Sonics' second win this season against San Antonio in as many tries, and both times they topped 100 points. The best anyone else has managed against the Spurs, now 16-4, is 96 points.

Despite the two wins, Allen called San Antonio the league's best team and said the Sonics are still taking shape.

"Right now, we're just one of the teams with the best records," said Allen, who finished with 29 points, including a pair of 3-pointers late in the game after San Antonio pulled to within a basket. "We've got to beat teams consistently to be talked about as one of the best teams."

Seattle looked like a runaway winner early, using 58 percent shooting from the floor to build



AP

Seattle SuperSonics' Ray Allen (34) drives past the defense of San Antonio Spurs' Bruce Bowen during the second half in San Antonio Wednesday. Allen led Seattle in scoring with 29 points in their 102-96 win over the Spurs.

a 19-point lead at the half.

"I think we came out more ready than they thought we would be," said Rashard Lewis, who scored 16 points for the Sonics. "We jumped on them early and everybody was making shots."

Players, Fans Given Criminal Charges in Pacers Brawl

PONTIAC, Mich. (AP) -- Five Indiana Pacers and seven fans were charged Wednesday in the melee that broke out at the end of a nationally televised game against the Detroit Pistons last month, one of the worst brawls in U.S. sports history.

Players Ron Artest, Stephen Jackson, David Harrison and Anthony Johnson were charged with one count of assault and battery. Jermaine O'Neal, a three-time NBA All-Star, was charged with two counts of assault and battery.

Five fans were charged with misdemeanor assault and battery, including Pistons star Ben Wallace's brother, David. Bryant Jackson also was charged with felony assault for throwing a chair into the fray, Oakland County prosecutor David Gorcyca said.

The misdemeanor carries up to three months in jail and a fine of up to \$500, and the

felony carries up to four years in prison, although Jackson could face more time because he has a prior criminal record.

Gorcyca singled out spectator John Green, who faces two assault counts and, the prosecutor said, "single-handedly incited this whole interaction between the fans and players and probably is the one that's most culpable." Green, who also has a prior criminal record, is accused of throwing a cup at Artest, splashing him and sparking the brawl.

Palace president Tom Wilson said Wednesday that all seven fans charged in the incident have been banned from the arena.

"We aren't saying that it is permanent, although it might be," he said. "It's definitely through the end of the season, and quite possibly beyond that."

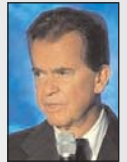
Gorcyca said the players and fans without prior convictions would probably face probation and fines if found guilty.



In Brief

TV Icon Clark Has a Mild Stroke

BURBANK, Calif. (AP) -- American Bandstand icon Dick Clark was hospitalized this week after suffering a mild stroke. Clark, who turned 75 on Nov. 30, went from hosting American Bandstand to game shows and producing awards ceremonies. "The doctors tell me I should be back in the swing of things before too long so I'm hopeful to be able to make it to Times Square to help lead the country in ringing in the new year once again," Clark said. Clark disclosed last year that he has diabetes.



Usher Dominates 2004 Music Scene

LAS VEGAS (AP) -- R&B impresario Usher dominated the 2004 Billboard Music Awards Wednesday night, picking up 11 awards in the latest in a string of accolades he has earned this year. His awards included artist of the year, R&B/hip-hop album of the year for "Confessions" and Hot 100 single of the year for "Yeah!" featuring Lil' Jon and Ludacris. The 26-year-old singer opened the show with a blast, dropping from the ceiling on a cord and performing "Bad Girl" while a bevy of beautiful women clad in white parkas and snow boots gyrated around him. Usher, whose album sold more than 1 million copies in its debut week, also had a big night at last month's American Music Awards and is nominated for eight Grammys.